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Concerning Elegance in Stationery

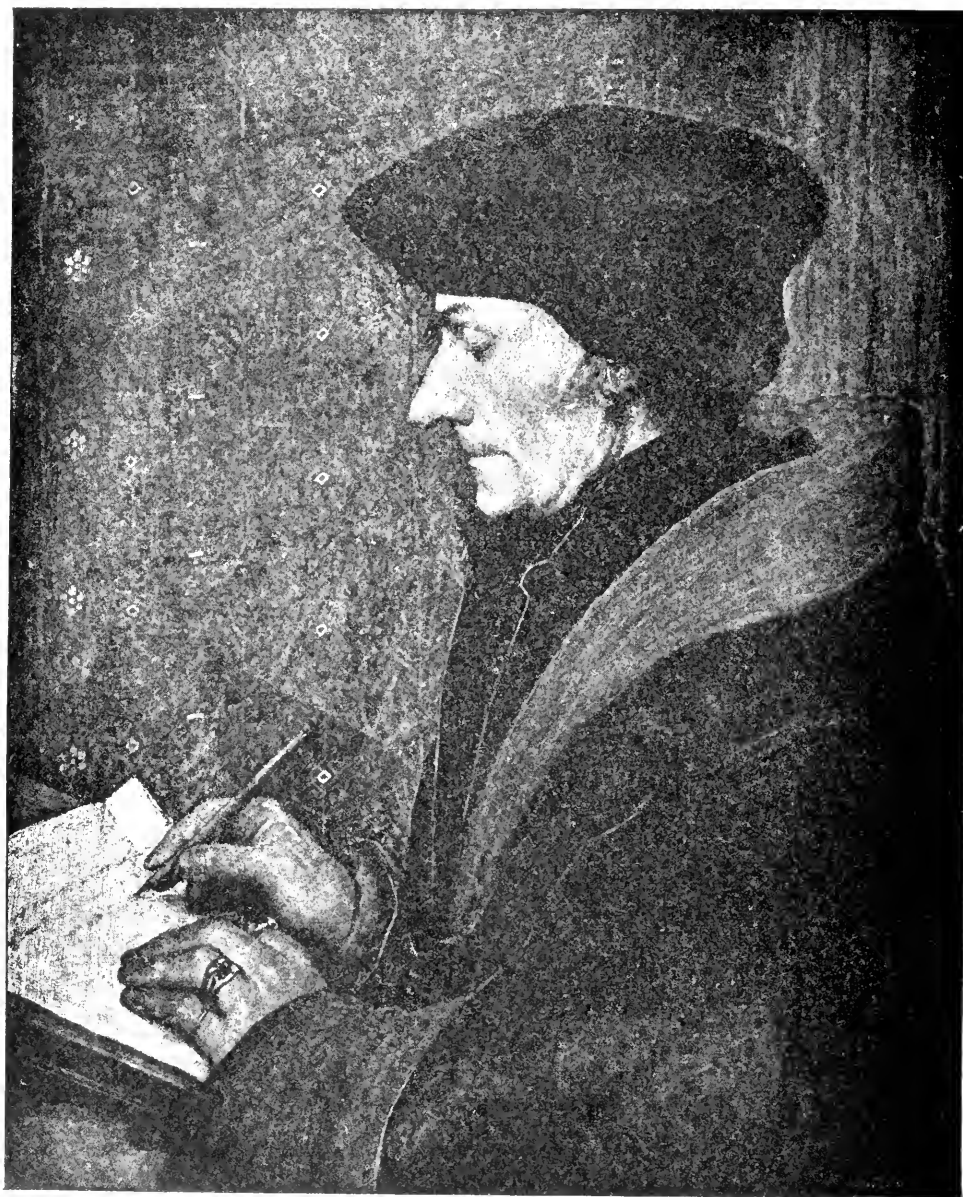
By Theo. Tracy



TWB







Erasmus  
Writing

# MATERIA ET OPUS

Concerning Elegance in Stationery

By  
THEO. TRACY



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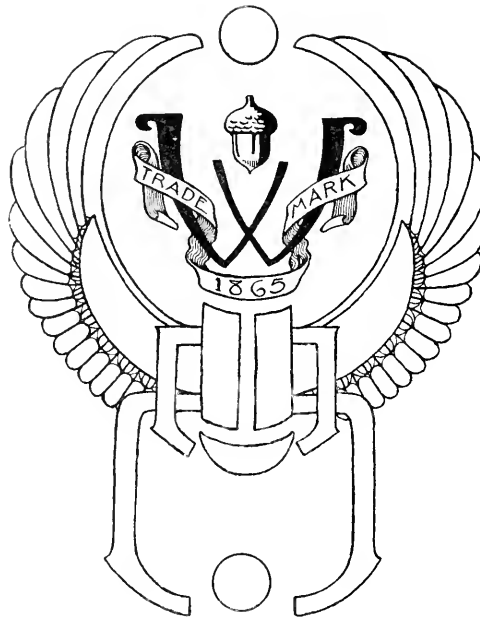
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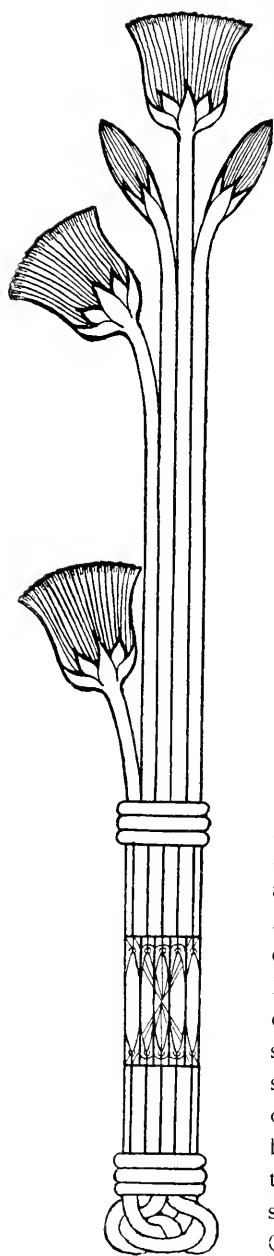
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IF YOU WISH ANOTHER COPY OF THIS BOOK FOR A FRIEND  
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THE paper on which we communicate our thoughts is as strong in its relief-like relation to those thoughts, as is a background of Titian, or Rubens, or Van Dyke to the portrait it has helped make so marvelously vital. It was, indeed, because these great artists were such masters of character-expression through color—because their genius responded so harmoniously to the nature-themes they were to show in color-tones, that they most profoundly felt the intimate relation of the background to the picture.

It is a lesson Polite Society learned so long ago that it may be considered almost an innate quality—that the writing papers with which one's *escritoire* is supplied, must be as carefully toned to the messages to be sent out on them, as is the delicate film of the photographer's plate to the image it is to receive.

One of the most interesting albums I know, is filled with gracefully arranged autograph letters from celebrities to a distinguished literateur. There are letters from Gladstone, Tennyson, Sir Philip Stanhope, the Bishop of London, Prince Bismarck, Emilio Castelar, Rubenstein, Emile Zola, Carmen Sylva, Madame Carnot; from Liszt, from Guy de Maupassant, from Salvini the elder, and from "La Bernhardt." The papers on which these letters are written, each singularly elegant in its adaptability, are as different as the chirographies which join in making them precious. Open the book—for example—at this sheet of rich "gris perle" not too heavy, and not too smooth, but exceeding sumptuous to the touch. It is edged with a much deeper shade of the same dainty color, and bears an artistic devise of asps and tragic masque. Does not everything about this paper suggest the writer without even glancing at the "Sarah Bernhardt" so gracefully signed in upward, flowing hand? Here is another letter-sheet—a light weight of snow-white parchment, suggestive of elegant strength and culture. It is Salvini's name it bears—clear-cut and finely shaded as if on cameo. Turn the pages again, please, and stop at this handsome, creamy, satin-smooth leaf—singularly symmetric in form—with Emilio Castelar's name below. Just one more and a very precious

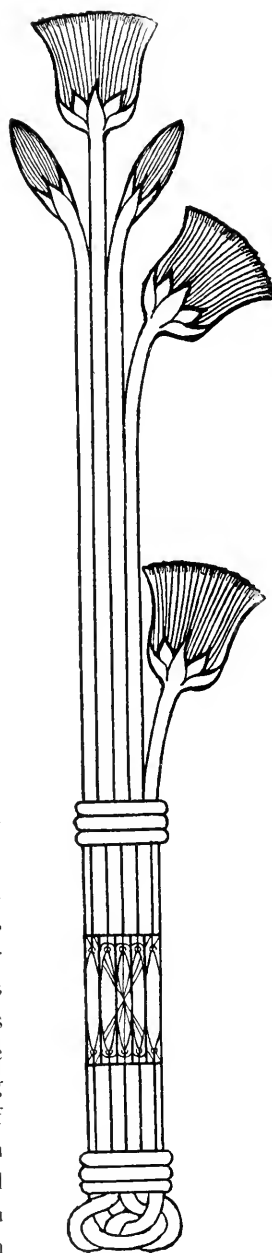
The  
Intimate  
Relation  
of  
Stationery  
to  
Personality

By way  
of  
Illustration

gem indeed, from this rare treasury—the plain, massively-rich, stately sheet that with large spaces between the lines of fine, firm writing, bears the name of Napoleon.

The  
Power of  
Paper in  
Correspond-  
ence

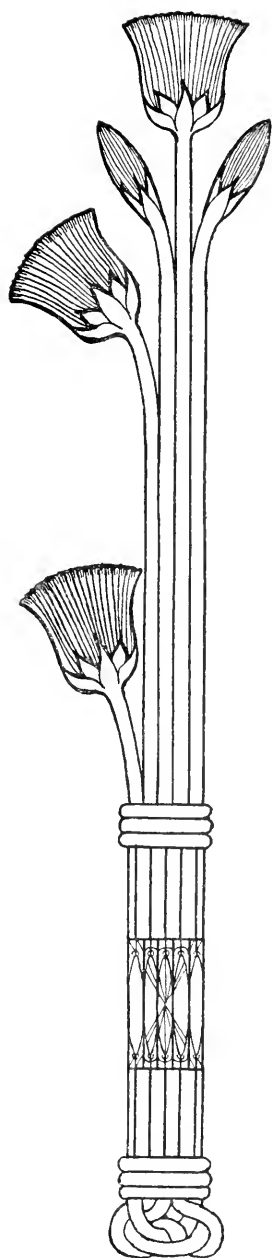
To leave our album, and to come to our own actualities;—Have you ever stopped to think what power for attraction or repulsion there lies in a sheet of writing paper? Perhaps not, as far as the literal analysis of the sensation caused by the airy scrap of material goes. But is there even one among my cultured readers who does not exceedingly enjoy the rich, luxurious “feel” of the burnished, cream-tinted, imposingly-substantial sheets her writing desk contains?—and admire the gossamer texture, the lawn-like surface, and the exquisite finish of other sheets lying beside these first-ready for other moments and other sending? What a satisfaction to lift a folio of thick “antique parchment” from its own compartment, and what a pleasure to sense the delicate thinness of the artistically perfect “bond” of which she may conveniently send as many pages as she will to those with whom she would hold interchange of thoughts, though leagues upon leagues of land and sea lie between? It is but natural that the writer should have a consciousness of the pleasant compliment implied in the sending of messages penned on such tasteful foundation, though it may seem so exactly part of what *should be* that she accepts the sentiment without defining it? It is just herein that the true secret of proper paper selection lies—for it is the “*what should be*” that the refined taste of a lady’s stationery demands—and, as our ladies’ taste indicates the trend of every culture-current, that is the criterion for every refined taste. Let her who has received the sheets which the innate understanding of fitness has sent, find others awaiting her—rough, smirched with spreading ink, out of size and out of tint—sans grace, sans tone, sans everything delicate;—repugnance is telegraphed through every fibre of her sensitive nature, indisposing her to accept the message in good will or even to give it passing heed, unless it be preceded by apology, which is the very poorest initiator of satisfaction and augurs ill indeed for the desired end. Does it seem much





A Soldier's  
Missive





to say? It is nevertheless true, that on the adaptability of the paper on which momentous ideas are communicated, and intimate thoughts are expressed, depends many and many a time the making or the marring of friendships, of fortunes and of futures.

This—from the time when the Egyptian magnates inscribed their hieroglyphs on the Nile papyrus whose secret the sage of Memphis taught them, until now. How lack of uniformity in the size of these papyrus leaves must have jarred upon their despotic, luxury-loving dictators! Nature and not they, controlled the Nile plant's growth, and as she had decreed that the size of every papyrus sheath—and so of every leaf,—be different, their will was as nothing to her edict. That epicurian lover of Art, the Roman Emperor Hadrian, with passion for elegance surpassing any of his peers—gathered a wonderfully rich store of the writing material of his epoch, and raised it to high dignity in his magnificent Tivolian villa. It is Hadrian too, who has left us the most enthusiastic description of the high art paper-making and attained in Alexandria when he and his splendid following visited that opulent city. Pliny—master historian of his great, historic age, wrote much of the power of these “transcription sheets” in the years that preceded his own epoch. The Evangel of St. Mark, esteemed beyond price in the jewel-like temple on the Riva of the Grand Canal, was inscribed on a heavy, vellum-like paper, that, from point of progress, makes it infinitely more interesting than even the parchment sheets of the Apocrypha, so carefully guarded by brown-robed monks in the unrivalled scientific and theologic book and manuscript collection of the old Roman Cardinal's Palace. Centuries on centuries ago, China, Japan, the whole Levant, recognized the vital power of paper, almost with awe. Perhaps it was the deep superstition which attended that stage of civilization that was a chief obstacle to its development then. All students of Eastern lore, know of the strange, Brahmin manuscript which was inscribed on great palm leaves; and all earnest inquirers into the pedigree of paper have learned of the Indian plant

Historic  
Marginalia

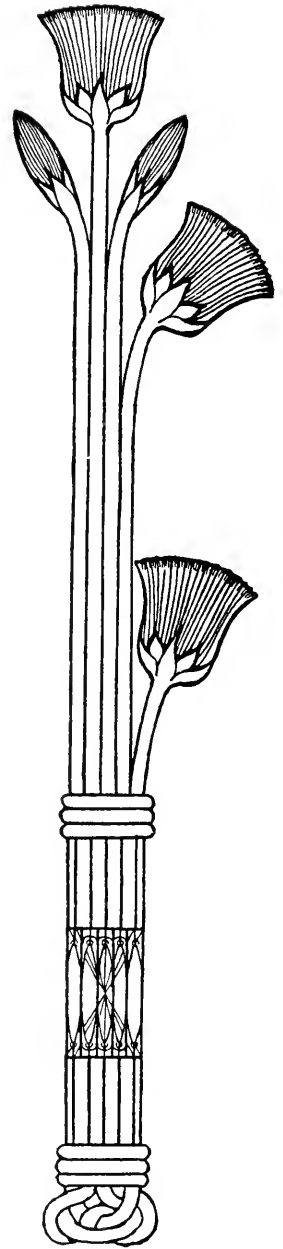
that yields a curious membrane, firm and white and small as the satin skin that lines an egg-shell, which long served the purpose of paper.

**Paper as a  
Measure of  
Progress**

“The measure of a people's progress,” says a wise axiomist, “may be found in the amount of paper this people consumes.” History places the seal of truth on these words. Wrote a philosopher of long ago:—“The highest stage of civilization is reached where there is the most perfect union of usefulness and beauty.” To no great attainment of to-day does the latter saying apply more forcibly than to our paper production, and into no national product have national characteristics more closely interwoven themselves than into the papers to-day's peoples produce.

**Peculiar  
Qualities of  
the Paper  
Produced  
in Different  
Lands**

There is the paper of Belgium—which nation long held precedence as producing more paper, for its size, than any other country; light and well-appearing, but not too perfect in texture and endurance, as a rule. There is French paper, somewhat resembling Belgian, but usually lighter, highly glazed, clear, and very dainty in combination of tint and design. There are the great mills of the Rhenish Provinces, whose papers while not wholly unlike those of France and Belgium, are firmer in texture, with one side generally much more highly finished than the other. There are English papers, and Scotch papers, made of stock selected with great care, more solid in appearance than the others, and harder to the touch. Notable among these are Pirie's papers, which until quite lately, held ascendancy over them all, for intrinsic value, great range of quality, finish and color, and especial adaptability to fine engraving. Some peculiar excellence has marked the papers of each of these countries, but none has learned how to combine these several excellencies—and to make the most of each excellence—until our own Country emphasized its place in Art Industries by its creation of papers which are, indeed, works of the highest and most cultured art.

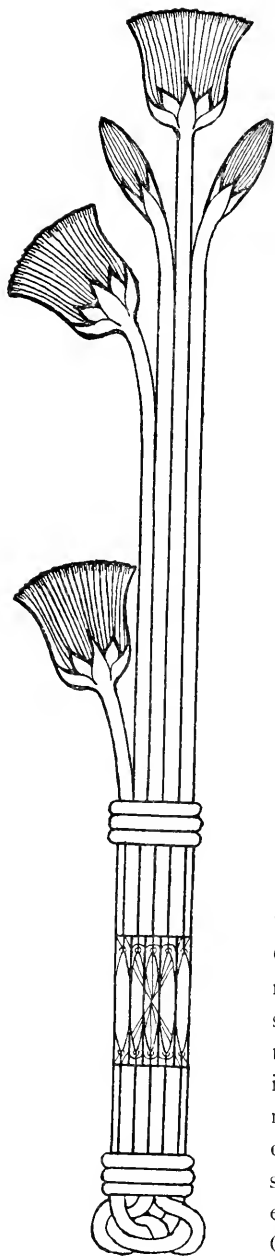




The  
Love Letter







Foremost in the production of Fine Correspondence papers in this country is the Whiting Paper Company whose name is now recognized the world over, as the synonym for what is most elegant in the paper maker's art. Neither the exquisitely tinted papers of France, nor the light, well-appearing papers of Belgium, nor those of England and Scotland in smoothness and firmness, nor of Germany in strength and variety, outrival these beautiful papers. No other country consumes such *quantity* of paper as we consume; equally, since the great mills of the Whiting Company were put in full operation, no other country produces such *quality* as we produce.

The Whiting Company's Papers—Combining all these excellences and adding others, is the finest in the world to-day

The best paper production rests on a triple basis, which is fully sustained here; the part of *nature* in the most perfect growth of the plants the production demands; the part of *science* for finding and maintaining an absolute equipoise between finest material and most subtle tinting; the part of *man* in the invention and operation of machinery which shall give this equipoise the highest material development. The symmetric union of "usefulness and beauty" the Whiting Papers represent, is an especially significant fact to us to day, when we recall the words of our axiomists, and when we remember how intimate is the touch of writing paper, medium as it is of direct communication between mind and mind, and people and people.

The Basis of Fine Paper Production

No papers manufactured abroad to-day perfectly respond to the demands of Polite Society, as do the papers of the Whiting Company; exquisite to the touch, daintily beautiful in tint, restful to the eye, firm and rich in texture, durable in substance, their use helps give rythm to the poem of thought, magnetism to desire, dignity and character to expression. It is another "as it should be" that these refined papers are rapidly displacing all foreign papers, whose importation (as commercial statistics prove) has astonishingly diminished since they were placed within Society's reach, and it is another evidence of what "is", that the production of the Whiting Company's fine papers, has more than doubled within the last

Characteristic Elegance of the Whiting Papers

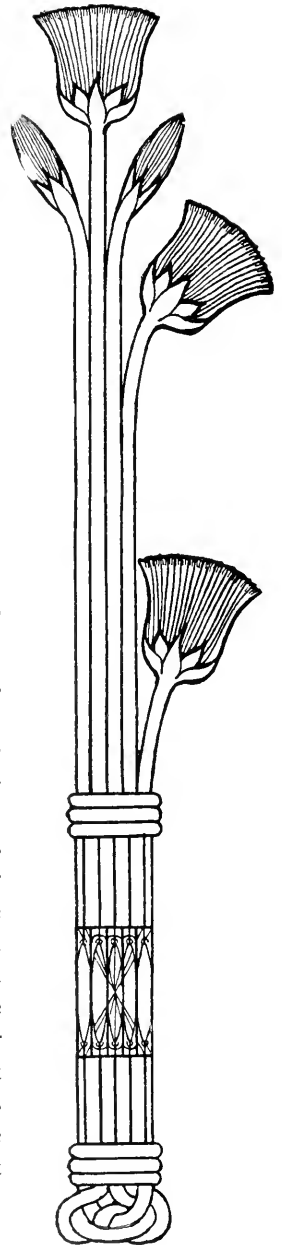
half decade. To touch lightly again on the magnetic power of paper; how much more grateful is the remembrance of those who, at parting, send us such paper—*Pour prendre congé*; and how much more cordially we heed the *Répondez s'il vous plait*, thus written, of those who are to be guided by our own thoughts or determination concerning some matter in hand?

#### Epochs in Paper

Now that elegant etiquette demands paper instead of cards for the majority of announcements and invitations as well as for communications, the existence right at hand, of such paper, adapted as it is to all uses and all occasions, is far more important than it ever was before. As our epochs become more marked, so, perhaps, our papers may grow to be named for them, as the French named their *Grand Soleil* and *Fleur-de-Lis* quite as appropriately as they named those insidiously flattering papers—*A l'Etoile* and *la Demoiselle*.

#### Why the Whiting Paper is Best

The Whiting Paper's right of title to be what it is universally acknowledged to be—"the best paper manufactured to-day," rests upon its *texture*, which is its aesthetic power—its *quality*, which is the discriminating factor of its composition—and its *general adaptability*, or power of satisfying refined tastes on all occasions. High class paper dealers have said much of the extreme difficulty experienced in exactly matching some strong or peculiar shade, once the original stock is exhausted. It is a very rare and a very great art to produce paper always practically the same in tint, but it is an art the Whiting Paper Company has made its own. The *tints* of their papers are the best, the most costly, and the most scientifically gauged and conserved. Its *linen* is *real* linen; and its *cotton* is the whitest and purest, even if necessary to bring it from across the ocean, to meet the Company's immense demands. Their paper is made under the most favorable conditions; the greater part of it is plated, the rest is perfectly calendered. The *sorting* is so scrupulously done that every sheet of paper with even the minutest speck in it, is immediately cast aside. This does not apply to cloudy effects, however; for some papers with cloudy effects when held to the light, are among the very best.





A Papyrus  
Scroll

An Elegantly furnished  
Escritoire

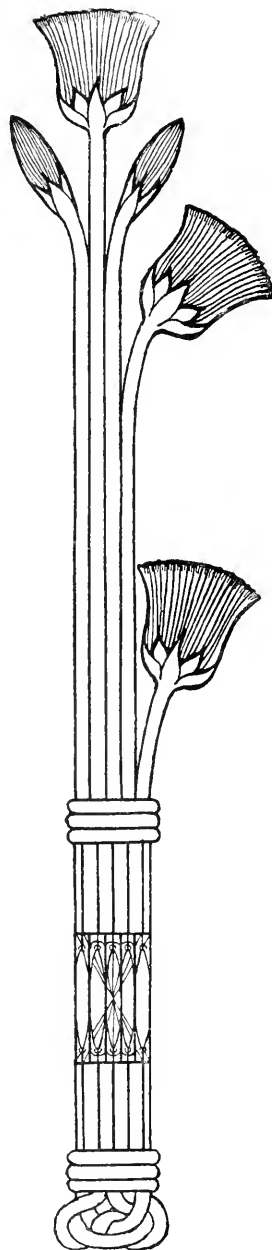
The social exactions of the day are so many and so onerous, that even our most cultured ladies are sometimes obliged to refresh their memories when looking to their escritoire belongings and to provide for the perfect equipment they and society demand, by taking note that they must be supplied with a variety of *latest tints* and *latest styles*, *small* and *large* for different occasions and different chirographies. Each paper must have its own box or compartment—such an arrangement being not only pleasant to the cultured eye, but an unmistakable hall-mark of quality. If, however, this direct personal care be rendered difficult through lack of time, or lack of inclination, a satisfied sense of relief rests in the knowledge that the Whiting Company is so infallibly in touch with all that concerns perfect paper—so absolutely *au courant* with fashion's latest and subtlest demands and caprices, that it can be implicitly trusted both with the supply and with the labeling.

General  
Adapt-  
ability

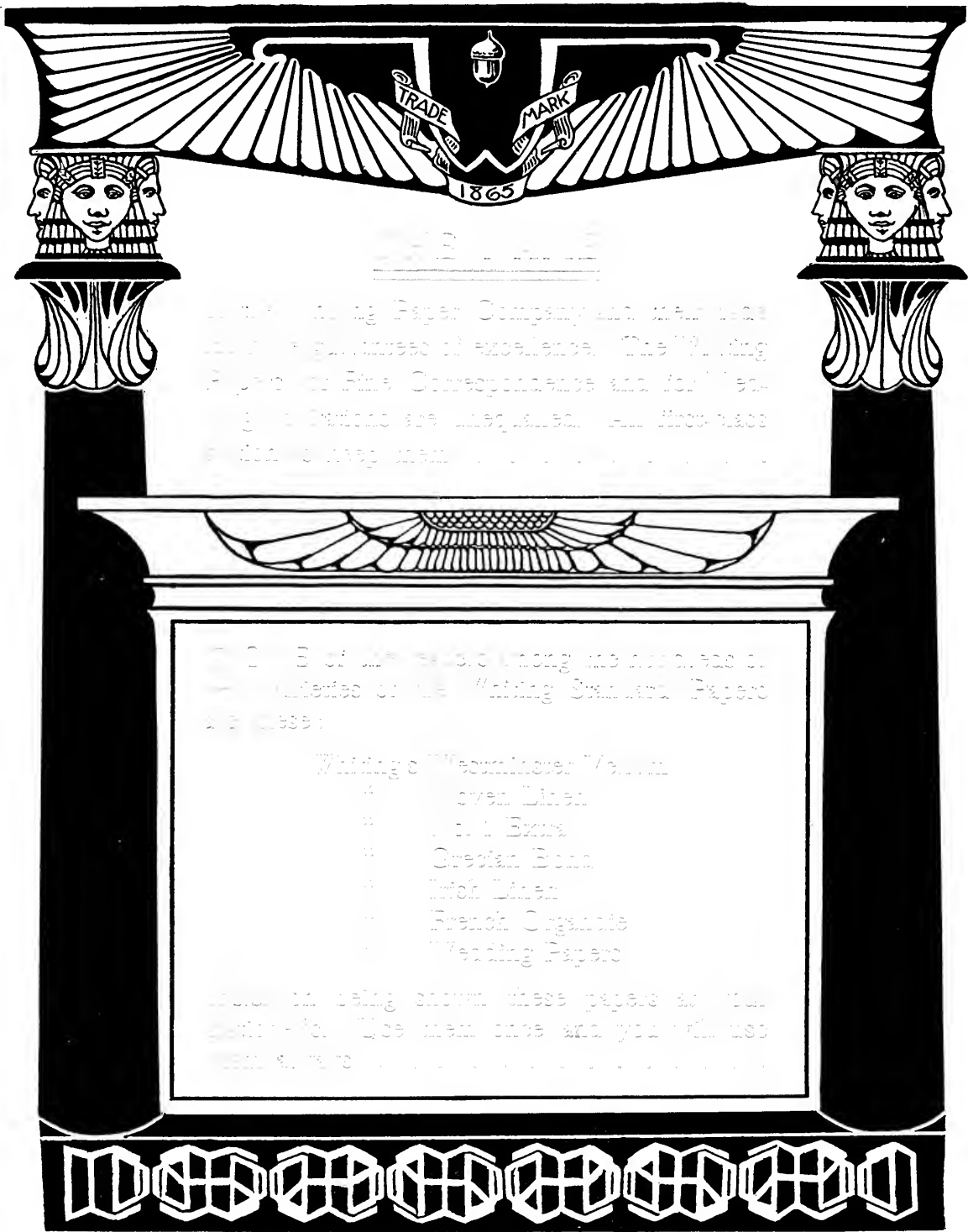
For messages at home or far away—for happy summons or for business order—for home festival, or for state occasion—for fair maiden or for charming matron—the papers of the Whiting Company contain every grace and excellence. They are emphatically *not* of the class which causes the tantalizing splutter of the pen, nor the blemishing spread of ink, spoiling the temper not only of the writer and of the receiver, but also of the letter written!

Color and  
Personality

In Palestrina's time, color was used as a musical indication. In many sensitive minds the mention of a name calls up its color counterpart; inversely, the mention of certain colors suggests certain persons whose grace, refinement, erudition, modesty, genius, dignity, or strength, we know and feel as we know and feel the colors of the flowers and of the clouds. So, while we must yield the honorable place of standard adaptability and dignity that cannot err—to pure white and palest French gray, we shall always love and turn towards those delicate or rich paper tints which grow to be inseparably associated with the natures of our friends—just as we turn to and love the odor of the flowers, the note of the forest stream, the rhythmic whisper of the leaves, and the tints of the morning and evening sky.







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